

The Honorable Robert J. Wittman
Statement for the Congressional Record
Submitted December 4, 2014

Mr. Speaker,

I applaud today's House passage of H.R. 3979, the Carl Levin and Howard P. "Buck" McKeon National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY 2015, which extends our strong commitment to our military. With growing threats around the world it is critical that we ensure our men and women in uniform are equipped and trained to get their jobs done to defend America. While passage of the defense bill is critical to protecting our national security, I am concerned with several provisions relating to military compensation and allowances.

Our nation's veterans and service members deserve our enduring commitment to maintain the disability, health, education and other benefits they have earned. I applaud Chairman McKeon and the House of Representatives for standing against the Senate and Department of Defense (DoD) proposal to significantly increase pharmacy copays and reduce the basic housing allowance. The Senate supported DoD's proposal to significantly increase pharmacy copays and cut the housing allowance by five percent. Under the Administration and Senate proposal, pharmacy copay rates for generic drugs would have increased each year up to \$14. The compromise adopted today by the House would limit select pharmacy copays to a \$3 increase for one year, which is only \$2 more than the \$1 increase that DOD is allowed to do under the current law. The cost for mail-order generic drugs would remain \$0. The final bill's basic allowance for housing only includes a one percent decrease, which is a better option than the Senate's proposal to cut it by five percent.

Due to the House's determination and leadership in fighting against unreasonable changes, the FY15 NDAA avoids significant reductions in compensation. I agree with Vice Adm. Norb Ryan (USN-Ret), President of the Military Officers Association of America (MOAA), when he said that, "With time running out, it would have been easy for the House to just cave to the Senate" and that the work of the House "helped blunt the blow to military families and retired beneficiaries."

However, without comprehensive review and recommendations from the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission report, it is premature to adjust the benefits of service members or their families. While I object to any reduction in service member or veterans benefits, today's passage of the defense bill is critical to our national security, and I will continue to support our service members, veterans and military families.